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MARYLAND

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2003

February 11, 2004

The Honorable Ann Veneman  
Secretary of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Veneman:

The recent discovery of avian flu on the Delmarva Peninsula is a potentially catastrophic situation for Maryland's poultry industry and Eastern Shore economy. While the outbreak has primarily been isolated to Delaware, the threat of the virus spreading to Maryland farms is of great concern. The poultry industry is the foundation of the Eastern Shore's agricultural economy.

We urge you to establish a regional U.S. Department of Agriculture Task Force to assist state and local entities as well as the private sector in containing and eradicating this virus. The expertise and resources of the federal government should be deployed to Maryland as part of the Delmarva region to help limit the impact of the virus.

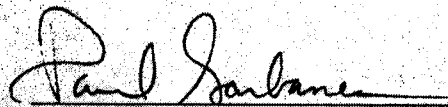
In addition, this outbreak points to an urgent need to ensure traceability of our nation's poultry stock. If a problem is found in a live poultry market, we must be able to find the source of the affected flocks to effectively contain any virus.

We take the discovery of avian flu on the Delmarva Peninsula very seriously. We urge your department to give the highest priority to assisting the poultry industry in our region and use whatever resources at your disposal to stay on top of this avian flu outbreak. Together we must assure that this disease has been contained and eradicated as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Mikulski  
United States Senator



Paul S. Sarbanes  
United States Senator